

Re: McKnight Lead Minister Decision

From: M Bret Blackford (bret_blackford@yahoo.com)

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Date: Tuesday, July 9, 2024 at 12:16 PM CDT

Guys,

This news is indeed disappointing, and there's no way to sugarcoat that.

In times like these, we must truly trust that God is in control and has a plan. As leaders, we need to express our faith in God's provision to the congregation. This means not just putting on a brave face but genuinely believing that, even though we are disappointed, this situation will somehow work for the benefit of God's kingdom. Certainly, the Church is bigger than any one individual, whether that's Ethan Laster or Jeff Kryder.

Continue praying!

--- Bret

On Tuesday, July 9, 2024 at 10:24:11 AM CDT, Ethan Laster <ethan.laster@slu.edu> wrote:

Dear McKnight Shepherds,

I know that this may come as a disappointment, but I am writing to let you know that I will be declining the offer to become the next lead minister at MX. I just got off the phone with Jeff informing him of the decision, and I also wanted to reach out to all of you directly.

As Sarah and I prayed about and discerned this offer over the last few weeks, we found, somewhat to our surprise, that the answer kept returning to "no." There was much about this job that made sense for us—a loving church in a city we love is a rare and wonderful thing. But the more we discussed how we wanted our lives to look, and how to best live into our values given the the current demands and pressures placed on us, we came to realize that saying "no" was the right choice.

The biggest factor for us was probably the time and attention I would be able to give Sarah and Miriam. By declining this offer, I have the opportunity to spend consistent time being with, and caring for, Miriam for the first 1-2 years of her life in a way that few fathers get. The closer we have gotten to Sarah's due date, the more we have realized how much we would need to sacrifice to make full-time ministry and dissertation writing work—both financially and attentionally—and it was family life that always suffered in that calculus. I also kept hearing from my family that they wanted me to prioritize my degree as much as possible, given the time and effort already invested. Programs like mine are extremely hard on families, and I wanted to honor their request to see it through.

This decision was especially hard for us, but we feel like it is the right one. I still think that ministry is in my future—it is such a wonderful calling—but after reviewing the offer, and taking the time to discern, I don't think that now is the right time.

We were so grateful for the warm welcome we received at McKnight, and we loved getting to know all of you, your wives, and the congregation you lead a little better. I hope you will understand, even if there is frustration and disappointment at my choice.

On a final note, I do want to say that I will still be around St. Louis for the time being, and while we will remain at Lafayette, I would be happy to fill in as the occasional preacher or teacher, should you be interested and have need.

Thank you, again, for your wonderful hospitality—I pray God's blessings over all of you and over your community.

All the best,
Ethan